



U.S. Department of Justice

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For Immediate Release:

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EVENT: Sentencing

Defendant: Michael Bratisax

**NEW YORK MAN SENTENCED FOR VIOLATING THE
CIVIL RIGHTS OF MEMBERS OF ISLAMIC CENTER OF AMERICA**

Michael Bratisax, a 46-year-old resident of Pleasantville, New York, was sentenced today for violating the civil rights of members from the Islamic Center of America in Detroit, Michigan, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today.

Bratisax was sentenced in United States District Court by Chief Judge Bernard A. Friedman to three years of probation with several specific conditions. The specific conditions of probation, beyond the general terms of probation, consisted of the following:

- Completion of an anger management program;
- Completion of a diversity class;
- No consumption of alcoholic beverages;
- No use of Electronic mail (E-mail) to communicate with strangers or unknown persons;
- Must create a web site devoted to diversity and anger management, and
- Must submit to random drug and alcohol usage testing.

Bratisax must also pay a \$25.00 Special Assessment.

According to the indictment, Michael Bratisax sent threatening e-mails from his home computer in New York state to the Islamic Center of America, with the intent to threaten Muslims in the free exercise of their religion. The e-mails threatened to kill Muslims in response to events in the Middle East. Bratisax pleaded guilty to the misdemeanour offense on November 9, 2005, carrying a maximum penalty of one year in prison.

The indictment resulted from an investigation by FBI, the United States Attorney's Office, and the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice. "This sentence demonstrates that there will be consequences for anyone who threatens other Americans because of the free to exercise their religious beliefs. Anyone hoping to use the veil of the Internet to send threatening messages should be forewarned that they will be caught," said United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy.

Assistant Attorney General Wan J. Kim said, "Threats against Muslims, Arabs, or any other group, with the intent to interfere with their right to exercise their religion, can not and will not be tolerated in a free society. Neither events in the Middle East nor anywhere else in the world justifies this hateful behaviour, as all Americans are treated equally under the law, and are entitled to the full protection of our civil rights laws."

The Justice Department has investigated over 700 bias-motivated incidents since September 11, 2001, involving violence or threats against individuals perceived to be Muslim or of Arab, Middle Eastern, or South Asian origin. Federal convictions have been obtained in 31 such cases. Additionally, state and local authorities have brought more than 150 criminal prosecutions, sometimes with assistance from the Department of Justice.